

JJC's Social Spaces: The Smoker, Lounge, D Mall and the Bridge

by Amy Chellino

The most memorable and meaningful aspects of our lives are the social connections we make. In college, these relationships open up discussions that ignite debates, leading to hours-long conversations, encouraging students to try out new viewpoints and test their beliefs. The social spaces that harbor these friendships are hallowed ground on campus where the bonds of acceptance and support are formed.

In the 1940s, '50s and '60s, when JJC was housed at Joliet Central High School, the Smoker and Lounge were the places to be. Between classes, these hangouts gave students a sense of identity and meaning and began to shape the individual within the community. When JJC moved to its current campus in the early 1970s, the D Mall and Bridge were areas dedicated to students for

unwinding and meeting with friends. Today, these popular spots are still filled with discussion, studying, and student activities.

In the 1960 yearbook, Assistant Dean Susan H. Wood celebrated the spirit of JJC with these words: "While there is a great deal of evidence to prove that college graduates earn more money during their lifetimes than those without a college education, their greatest dividends are the many intangibles which make their lives meaningful and purposeful." Compassion, kindness, company and generosity are a handful of traits Wood was referring to as we learn by communicating and connecting with our peers. Our legacies, which unfold within us and are nurtured by our friendships, begin in these social spaces.

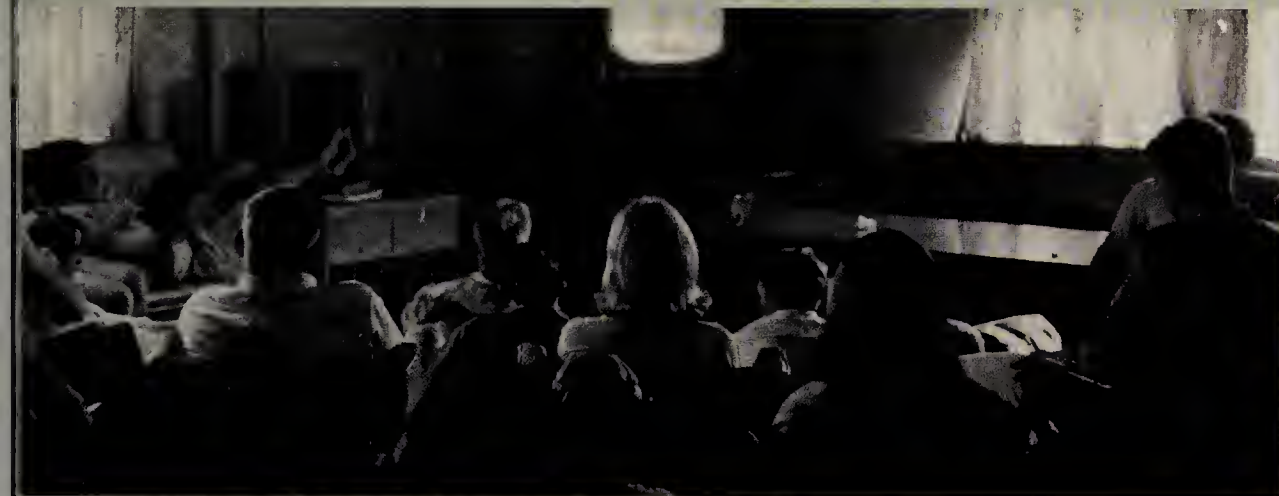
The Smoker: 1940s-1960s

Opened in 1947, one of the most popular spots on JJC's campus was the smoker. Initially, it was only for men and described in a 1948 Blazer as "the masculine sanctuary of nicotine neurotics" and a "cough chamber." Historian Robert Sterling noted, "[Opening the smoker] was due largely to the number of returned servicemen on campus to whom smoking had become a near necessity." Alumnus Dorian Rikken '61 recalled, "The smoke was so thick that even though I smoked at the time, I hardly went in there."



The Lounge: 1950s-1960s

The lounge offered a place for students to visit with friends, work on assignments, have club meetings and watch TV. Alumnus Harry Reiss '65 recounted, "Everyone hung out in the lounge between classes... It was where gossip took place and dates were made." Sterling noted, "The lounge was described as the heart of the college socially, one of the first places that students looked when trying to locate their friends." In 1955, the lounge received a \$3,000 remodel including a 21-inch television set and 45-speed record player.



D Mall: 1970s

Known as a center for culture and entertainment on campus according to a 1973 Blazer article, The D Mall was the place for ID photos, college recruitment, club meetings, concerts, comedians and socializing...truly a little bit of everything. Thousands of students passed through the concourse making their way to class each day. The carpeted stairs offered a perfect gathering place between classes. Alumna and retired faculty member Catherine Suchy '83 explained that Seal Island was the nickname for the stair area. "Lots of folks gathered there and there was also a lot of smoking!" Suchy recalled.

While the stairs have been converted to the Office of Student Activities, there are still plenty of tables and chairs where students meet. The Office of Students Activities keeps everyone busy and happy with free popcorn days, grab 'n go breakfast, numerous Welcome Week activities, and much more.

